1: Roth--37 (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 824

"They have given particular names to every vegetable. We assured ourselves, that their botanical knowledge was unequivocal, by asking several of them, at different times, the names of the same plants. [WEL: citing La Billardière, I, pp. 181-211; 1792]."

1: Roth--108 [3] (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 222, 252, 262, 824

"As was to be expected of a race in their condition, the Tasmanians appear to have availed themselves largely of the edible vegetable productions which abounded in their island. La Billardière noticed that they made use of fern roots, sea weeds, fungi, etc. (II. ch. v. p. 235; ch. x. p. 14; ch. x. p. 50). The sea-wrack (Fucus palmatus) they broiled, and when it was softened to a certain point, they tore it to pieces to eat it, ... and the ficoides they eat without preparation. Rossel also refers (I. ch. iv. p. 99) to the fern roots eaten by the natives;..."

"... Melville says: 'And at certain seasons they procured, in great abundance, what is called the native bread, a kind of truffle' (p. 346). Gunn probably refers to this when he describes punk (I. p. 47): 'The large white fungus, called in the Colony "punk," which grows from the stringy bark, is said to have been been eaten when fresh by the aborigines.' Milligan, after describing their fish diet, continues: 'With these they mingled the core or pith of the fern trees, Cibotium Billardieri and Alsophila Australis (of which the former is rather astringent and dry for a European palate, and the latter, though more tolerable, is yet scarcely equal to a Swedish turnip); the young shoots of the Pteris esculenti, common ferns, as they emerge from the ground full of viscid mucous juice and various epiphytic fungi, of which one of the most important is that which grows on the Eucalypti, and is known, [109] when dry, under the name of Punk, and used as tinder in the Colony. Punk, when young, is nearly snow-white, soft, and to the taste insipid, with a distant flavour of mushroom; in this stage they eat it freely, either raw or slightly roasted. The Cyttaria of the myrtle tree, a small morelle-looking, honey-combed fungus, growing upon a fine pedicle, was a great favourite; but that which afforded the largest amount of solid and substantial nutritious matter was the native bread, a fungus growing in the ground, after the manner of the truffle, and generally so near the roots of the trees as to be reputed parasitical. Several mushrooms were also eaten by them; the onion-like leaves of some orchids, and the tubers of several plants of this tribe, were largely

consumed by them, particularly those of Gastrodi sessamoides, the native potato, so called by the colonists, though never tasted by them.... The green seed-vessels of Acacia sophora, A. maritima, and several others were eaten freely by them, after having been half-roasted by the fire; the amylaceous roots of the bulrush were roasted and eaten by them, together with the carrot-like roots of some small umbelliferae. Of berries and fruits of which they partook, the principal were those of Solanum laciniatum, or kangaroo apple, when dead ripe, of Leucopogon gnidium and ericoides, of certain species of Coprosma, of the Gualtheria hispida, the Billardiera longiflora, of Cyathodes, etc. Besides these, the leaf of the larger kelp, whenever it could be obtained, was eagerly looked for and greedily eaten, after having undergone a process of roasting and maceration in fresh water, followed by a second roasting, when, though tough....it is susceptible of mastication' (Beacon, pp. 26-28)."

1: Roth--109
116, 262, 824

(No date) 1890 Tasmanians

"Another account says (Proc. Roy. Soc. Van Diemen's Land, I. p. 164), 'The pith in the uppermost part of the column of a young and vigorous Alsophila is soft and succulent, and, as compared with that from the common Tasmanian fern tree (Cibotium Billardieri), is devoid of astringency, and has a bland sweetish taste. The pith of both tree ferns was formerly eaten in a half-roasted state by the aborigines, but that from the Alsophila was preferred. Their maxim was, that the pith of the Cibotium must be eaten along with the flesh of the kangaroo, etc.; while that from the Alsophila was considered so good that it might be partaken of alone.'"

116, 262, 824

"Backhouse records, 'We saw many of the tree ferns, with the upper portion of the trunk split and one half turned back. This had evidently been done by the aborigines to obtain the heart for food, but how the process was effected I could not discover. It must certainly have required consider-[110]able skill.' In the Appendix to his book he adds a list of native plants, from which we extract particulars of those made use of by the natives for purposes of food. 'Geranium parviflorum: the aborigines were in the habit of digging up the roots of this plant, which are large and fleshy, and roasting them for food. It was called about Launceston, Native carrot. This species is very widely distributed over the Colony, and is usually found in light loamy soil. Although we possess about sixty species of this [pea] family, exclusive of the Acaciae, none of them yield good edible seeds. The aborigines were in the habit of collecting the ripening pods of Acacia, Sophora, or the Boobialla, and, after roasting them in the ashes, they picked out the seeds and eat them. Orchidaceae: a number of plants of this family have small bulbous roots, which were formerly eaten by the aborigines. Xanthorrhoea australis? Grass tree: The base of the inner leaves of the grass-tree is not to be despised by the hungry. The aborigines beat off the heads of these singular plants by striking them about the tops of the trunks with a large stick; they then strip off the outer leaves and cut away the inner ones, leaving about an inch and a half of the white tender portion, joining the trunk; this portion they

eat, raw or roasted; and it is far from disagreeable in flavour, having a nutty taste, slightly balsamic. The most extensively diffused edible root of Van Diemen's Land is that of the Tara-fern. This plant greatly resembles Pteris aquilina, the Common Fern, or Brake of England.... The Tasmanian plant is Pteris esculenta, and is known among the aborigines by the name of Tara.... The root is not bulbous, but creeps horizontally, at a few inches below the surface of the earth, and where it is luxuriant, attains to the thickness of a man's thumb.... The aborigines roast this root in the ashes, peel off its black skin with their teeth, and eat it with their roasted kangaroo, etc., in the same manner as Europeans eat bread. Cybotium Billardieri, Tree Fern: The native blacks of the Colony used to split open about a foot and a half of the top of the trunk of the Common Tree-fern, and take out the heart, a substance resembling the Swedish turnip, and of the thickness of a man's arm. This they also roasted in the ashes and eat as bread; but it is too bitter and astringent to suit an English palate. It is said the aborigines preferred the heart of another species of tree-fern, Alsophila australis, found at Macquarie Harbour and in other places on the northern side of Van Diemen's Land. Mylitta Australis, Native Bread: this species of tuber is often found in the Colony, attaining to the size of a child's [111] head; its taste somewhat resembles boiled rice. Like the heart of the Tree-fern, and the root of the native potato, cookery produces little change in its

character. On asking the aborigines how they found the native bread, they universally replied, "A Rotten Tree."' Gunn says the Mesembryanthemum aequilaterale (pig faces) is the canagong of the aborigines: 'The pulp of the almost shapeless, but somewhat ob--conical, fleshy seed vessel of this plant is sweetish and saline' (I. p. 48), and Gell also refers to this (ibid. II. p. 323). Lists of plants that could have been used for food by the aboriginal Tasmanian natives have been made out, but it is not necessary to repeat them here."